

Colorado Chapter

American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



October 20, 2020

Dear Governor Polis:

Like you, we are gravely concerned about the trajectory of the state as it relates to rising numbers of COVID cases and hospitalizations. We stand in partnership with you as you work on behalf of all Coloradans.

As community spread increases, in-person school will be less and less feasible if concerted efforts are not made to prioritize classrooms across our state now. As such, our organizations urge you to prioritize the safe, in-person education of all Colorado children and to keep school-based health centers open in order to continue meeting critical health needs of Colorado's children.

Data from many Colorado school districts that have opened with in-person learning shows children are not contributing to significant COVID spread in classroom settings. Further, recent studies have demonstrated that child care centers do not drive the spread of the Coronavirus. Where proper mitigation strategies are in place, such as masks, frequent hand washing, cohorting, and social distancing, in-person learning has been relatively safe to date.

Keeping our children in school, where they can safely learn, as well as socialize, get physical activity, have access to important resources, such as mental health care, special education, and meals should be a top priority that we can - and must - continue working towards together. We know some of our most vulnerable children have not yet had the opportunity to start in-person learning and that option may not be available to them at all if Colorado's rates continue to rise. On top of that, when schools are not returning for in-person learning, children and youth are not regularly accessing school-based health centers for critical well child visits, immunizations, and more. When schools are closing, some school-based health centers are closing temporarily as a result – which impedes access to care.

We stand ready to continue doing our part to support you as you work to keep Coloradans - including our smallest citizens and the trusted adults in their lives - safe.

Please take action now by implementing restrictions on social gathering and places or activities where we know COVID to be spreading more rapidly. The time to act in the best interest of Colorado students and educators is today, rather than in a few more weeks knowing the prolonged incubation period of the virus. By then, we may be in an even more untenable position to work towards safe, in-person learning.

As we head into the winter months, when COVID numbers are expected to explode, we need to be well-positioned. As it stands, we are over the 5% threshold of community spread that the CDC has suggested for allowing safe in-person learning. We know this is not an easy call to make, but we believe as doctors, educators, and leaders we must be dynamic and aggressive in order to prioritize the most vulnerable and voiceless members of our society.

Thank you for your leadership and partnership.

Sincerely,

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